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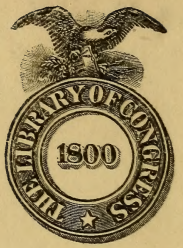
My Rubaiyat

by

Sadakichi Hartmann



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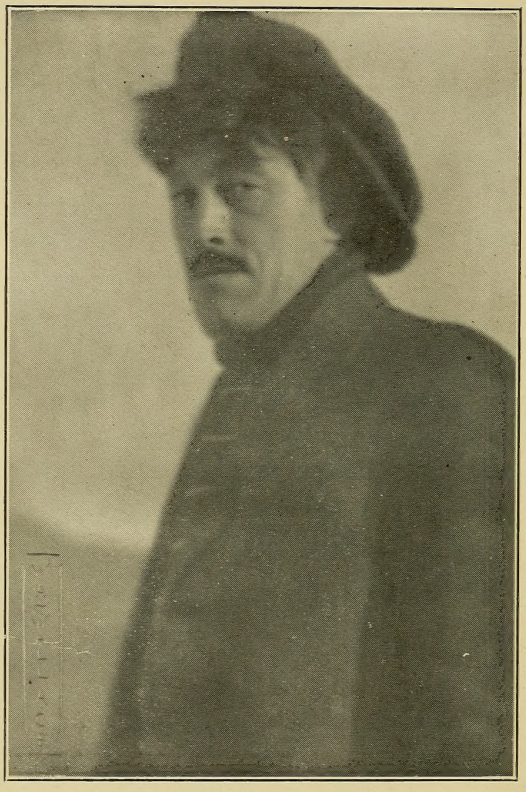

My Rubaiyat

by

Sadakichi Hartmann

Author's Edition
The Mangan Printing Company
Saint Louis

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The Mangan Printing Company
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Of a poem of this scope and character, it can never be said that it is complete and finished. No doubt, it will be revised many times, but the poem has crystallized sufficiently in thought and versification to be offered to the public.

The rhythm may appear strange at times. To fully appreciate it, it would be necessary to hear the author read the poem. The metre is a combination of Whitman's free rhymeless rhythm, the vers libre which changes with every subject and mood, and the vague alliteration of sound in quarter tones, characteristic of Japanese poetry.

I.

What should we dream, what
should we say,
On this drear day, in this sad
clime.
In the garden the asters fade,
Smoke of weed fires blur the
plain,
The hours pass with a sullen
grace—
Can we be gay if skies are
grey.

II.

Would life be saner in the South,
On some palm-girt, sunnier beach,
Some lambent world of green and gold
Fanned by the charm of Orient lay!
'Tis vain delusion thus to think
That life will change with change of scene.

III.

Man cannot get away from facts
Alas, stern duty looms supreme,
For certain things we must perform,
Obey the inward voices' call.
Calm joyous days cannot be wooed
Lest our conscience is at peace.

IV

Life is to most a weary task,
A bitter strife for daily bread.
We cannot act as we would
like,
We cannot gain for what we
strive.
To bear our burden cheerfully
Is all this earth allows to
us.

V

Our tired soul with faint
forced smile
But rarely scales the loftier
themes
Fair Hafiz and Anacreon
Have they drunk, laughed and
sung in vain!
Does grove and grange no
longer yield
The idyls of Theocritus!

VI.

Was life once happier than
now?
Who is there to tell the story
Of the bliss of dim dead ages.
We know that roses still bloom,
Books and music still make
us dream,
Why mourn o'er "snows of
yesterdays"

VII

There were ever some more favored
Who carefree basked in fortune's sun.
The rest did toil. And you and I?
We hear the same recurrent rhymes,
Like changing seasons, night and day,
We simply come, sojourn, and go.

VIII

We enter the world unbidden,
Plod along roads as we know best.
One is born rich, the other poor,
Who knows what helps a mortal most.
Ere we comprehend what we want
We are forever what we are.

IX

The laughter of childhood is
gone,
The toy castles we built are
lost—
Can we redeem in future days
The disappointments of the
past!
Our nursery songs will they
change
Into jubilant songs of love!

X

Light headed youth, all smiles
around
In dewlit gardens of spring
morns
No heed takes of the dial's pin-
Youth wants to possess every-
thing—
While the sun runs its
ruthless course
And shadows begin to lengthen.

XI.

In open woods some summer night,
The sound of the wind in the leaves—
Two vagrant lovers hand in hand—
O'er treetops the errant moon.
Oh, this mad desire to possess!
To waste the soul on blood-red lips.

XII

Sex is a power all cherish,
We worship it on bended knees,
Like old wine it yields the magic
Of oblivion and ecstasies,
The moments drift on golden clouds
To regions of the white beyond.

XIII.

Alas, that pleasures never last,
That we must leave the fairy
woods
And pass along the great highway.
As much as horizons may
beckon,
They flee us the more we pursue
To distances we ne'er can reach.

XIV

The more we give the less we
gain—
This is a bitter truth to tell.
Yet passion is a fleeting thing
As flowers wane in summer's
heat,
Thus eager kisses, thigh to thigh
Turn phantoms with the colder
morn,

XV

Why had you, dearest, to leave
me!
Why must friend from friend
depart.
Perchance, I shall find the
answer
Midst howling winds and rain
Where sombre forests sway and
moan
And lightnings stir the darkest
lairs.

XVI

Few think they can give without
gain,
They attempt to barter with love.
Love comes, it is here, it departs
Leaving wet eyes and broken hearts.
How when we are young can we
guess:
Love's winter ne'er returns to spring

XVII.

Love is a growth, a wondrous plant
That scatters its seed plots unseen,
That sheds rarest unknown
delights
To those few that worship the dream.
For love squanders all its treasures,
Why should it ask for a return.

XVIII

When the bloom of youth has faded,
Life is naught but grey routine,
Sup well, sit warm, drink deep,
sleep sound,
That is the gamut of pleasures.
New vista beckon here and there
Yet men stay, sullen, where they
are.

XIX

Let me escape from the city
Into the blue shimmering night,
It speaks of all I could have
loved,
It speaks of all I longed to see,
To understand, to own, and feel—
Why did so little come to me!

XX

Ah, my fate is not different.
It is like that of all the rest.
There grew flowers at the wayside—
They were mine. I did not cull
them.
There were chances made for
blessing
When both of us remain'd unblessed

XXI

Can a being ever be yours?
Do you know the thoughts of a friend.
Why does your heart go to strangers
When you own a heart that is true?
Sunlight passes. The night draws near.
Have you been loyal to anyone?

XXII

We reap the harvest that we sow.
Rich crops may spear in rainless heat
Icy winds chill all hopes of spring-
Stern laws of chance and
circumstance!
Yet if your seeds were vain as
chaff
Your own will never come to you.

XXIII

Let me pass on to the seashore,
Watch the traverse of white sails,
The seagulls in their spiral
flight,
The breakers that brighten the
waves,
And as in rambles of boyhood
Fling pebbles out into the sea.

XXIV

They skip o'er the gleaming surface,
They sink and vanish from sight
As all that abides on this earth.
Yet on the surface like stray thoughts
Each ripple owns an inner life
And wavelike stirs the azure brine.

XXV

The circle widens, travels farther;
With each emotion keenly felt
Onward it pushes 'cross the waves
Of stormlashed oceans to unbend
Its tide of beauty on the shore
Of some hopeswept and sun-
kissed isle.

XXVI

And there amidst some rarer air
To blossom forth in some great deed—
May it be done by hand or mind—
For the upheaval of the race,
To reach some pinnacle of truth
Where light envelopes you and all.

XXVII

This is the land where giant minds,
Vaster than light, vaster than space
Hear whisperings of the infinite,
And with proud sorrow in their eyes,
Their wild maned coursers ever ready,
Fly off into the skies of thought.

XXVIII

Yet who can follow flights like
these,
Who plucks the stars from night's
blue vault!
Imagination, sluggish thing,
Will not obey the gayer moods,
Our mind can only peer as far
As fate has lent it eyes to see.

XXIX

Men do not think, they merely
dream,
They only long for crude, rough
things,
Madly chasing will o' the wisps,
Success by force they try to
grasp,
It lures them on to wilder scenes
Where the peace of their souls
is lost.

XXX

Why this dull haste, this bitter
waste
Of youth and manhood's fullest
powers.
To amass riches for your heirs
The highest interests seem low,
And no man's pelf does command
wealth,
Nor can it buy friendship or love.

XXXI

So many do what others do,
They cannot rise from the
green mould
With which their thoughts are
overgrown.
Life is so varied and diverse,
They peevish bow to any yoke,
That the moment has to offer.

XXXII

Thus people born in low estate
Just drag their burden, day by day.
'Tis hard to mend what is inborn
And slow the lift to higher plains.
If drudgery rules from morn to night-
They needs must suffer earthly bane.

XXXIII

They stir the coals, press the
bellows—
While iron shimmers in the forge
The air is dust, the houses black,
Smoke dragons twine 'round
chimney stacks
And belch foul breath into the streets.
Where is the sun? Has day turned
night?

XXXIV

What use to speak to slaves like these
Of odors sweet of new-mown hay,
Red and blue flowers in the wheat,
The old homestead, barns and stables,
Cows coming down the road—
The angelus over harvest fields.

XXXV

There's joy in labor, so they say,
And well that they sing its praises,
Or mankind in bitter despair
Would leave factory, forge and shop,
Stead living through their daily toil
Without a thought that death is near.

XXXVI

Afraid of death men do not think
Of their vague meaning on this earth.
Blindly they hope for after bliss
Or sneer at things they can not guess,
For is not death the cause of all
That ever troubled a man's brain.

XXXVII

Why do we live, why do we hope,
Why does this life exist at all!
How do we dare to love and mate
When every path is strewn with thorns,
When children share in our fate
And age is glad to greet the night!

XXXVIII

And is it endless sleep and night,
Deliverance or new keen pain!
Hot pitch or stale ambrosia?
There are too many gods adored,
Can one be right, all others wrong—
Who solves the problem why we are?

XXXIX

There is no answer to the quest,
Who knows where we will meet
again!
The star realms opening at night
Tell us of other wonder worlds~
Are they spinning through space
for us,
Shall we breathe there an ampler
air.

XL

Follow yon pilgrims of the East
Through avenues of cypress dim,
Through golden temples, portals
red—
Faithful they climb the holy hill
And there confront an empty space
Is that the signet of the grave!

XLI

Some think they know and
others doubt,
But none can offer balm to all.
If all were good and fair to meet
This earth would be a pardise;
We would not long for other skies
And gather fruit from every tree.

XLII

But what sad use the world has made
Of nature's boundless plenitude.
The free and good, the fair and true
Is trodden down by foolish crowds.
Greed, barren, shameless, rules supreme,
There is no brotherhood 'mong men.

XLIII

They dream of universal peace
In times when greed still
cruder grows
Than in the days of Skalds and
Huns—
Oh, dream of a fraternal race,
Of happiness to all of man!
When love will stronger prove
than war!

XLIV

The sword shall break the sword
they say,
And force shall strangle force
some day.
Thus men march toward battles
red,
Their mangled bodies strew the
plains,
While o'er the corpse the
mother wails,
Her firstborn slain, her pride in
life.

XLV

Why should youth be killed from afar,
Races struggle in deadly clutch,
Is there not room for all workers,
Is not death's scythe sharp enough!
Oh, mankind, when will you waken
To a lesson nobler than death!

XLVI

If youth would refuse to obey
To die without cause or reason
If youth would refuse to bear
arms
Against brothers they do not know,
Then like the Chaldean shepherds
We might greet a rosier dawn.

XLVII

One holy war has to be fought—
To make both man and woman free:
The world will flash with signal lights,
Each land ring with its people's voice—
For from those crimson rivulets
Will flow a saner better life.

XLVIII

For certain things must need be
changed,
Life cannot stay so dull and grey.
Men must live a freer windblown
life,
Women no longer lose their bloom
In drudgery for bed and fare,
And children age before their
time.

XLIX

Draughts of pure air, bright beams
of light
Are free gifts coming from the
skies,
Why should sad mothers, children
frail
Pine in dark and gruesome hovels,
Freeze and starve, and with
thirsty eyes
See life with song and dance
glide by.

L

And hunger is a fearful thing.
It dwarfs the better part in man,
Naught but a withered shell it leaves
Of some thing that should live and breathe.
All nobler impulses turn ghosts,
Spectres of death among the quick.

LI

It lifts the knife to deadly thrusts,
It treats like brutes all those it sways,
It presses torches into fists,
And peaceful men turn to revolt.
We stand at brinks of volcanoes
Yet smilingly dot them with homes.

LII

What can we do, how can we help!
The poor can never help the poor,
The rich but scatter alms derived
From what is due the common herd.
The weed plots are crowded thick,
Who cuts a path for weary feet!

LIII

Oh, the helplessness of the aged,
Of the poor the sick, the lonely.
Can you explain why they suffer,
Must some perish while others thrive?
Is survival of the fittest
Due to the harshness of mankind?

LIV

Oh, these homes of blighted
reason,
Who would not weep at sights
like these.
Few years ago they were like us,
They worked and played, they
loved and laughed,
And now—beasts without reason;
Where are their former joys
and hopes!

LV

And those who lurk in deadly sin,
Whose book of life reads blood and gold,
Thieves, bandits, outcasts, vagrom men,
Eternal victims of the law,
Who cannot rise, who have no chance
To wash their grimy hands from crime.

LVI

They know not what to do on
earth,
Their cup is filled with hate
and lust.
None has taught them. Will
you teach them?
Have you a better soul than they?
You have drawn a lucky number,
For them say fortune went
astray.

LVII

In foolish kindness some aspire
To staunch the ever aching wound,
And so they teach, and so they
preach.
How vain to think that your idea
May cure the vanity of things,
'Tis shuttlecock and battledore.

LVIII

How can I give right directions
When I am a wanderer myself!
Onward I stroll and ever on
In my own way courting the sun
And fashioning some paradise
Of passing winds and flying
clouds.

LIX

For my happiness cannot be
yours;
In humble ecstasy I could live
In a hilltown, among roses,
With robins feasting at my table,
While woods and fields, valleys
and streams
Around would be my promised
land.

LX

You might not like such simple
fare,
For you the winds may blow too
mild—
I cannot tread your well-paved roads
Though verdant they may seem to you.
Each path leads to some point of
view,
What you like best, is best for you.

LXI

Sunshine we want but also
shadows,
Each joy demands its note of pain,
Each cheek must know the fall
of tears
That many dream swept hopes
are vain.
Sorrow digs up unknown treasures
Within the caverns of the mind.

LXII

Have you ever lost a treasure
Dearer to you than gold or health!
Have you followed a white hearse that
Carried your dearest dream away,
Watched the deathbed of your mother,
Or closed a friend's dull staring eyes!

LXIII

You know the chilling gnaw of
frost,
The bitter pain of a blank day.
The world grows dark, a vanished
dream,
Yet it will leave light within its
wake,
As a flower expands by dew
Tears shed by the heart enrich the
soul.

LXIV

They furrow thought, they
strengthen will,
Cleanse the foul places of the mind,
Yield soothing light to ship-wrecked
hearts.
Happy those who, sorrow-driven,
Bright moments wrest from waves
of pain
And sail their barks to peaceful
ports.

LXV

This is the true philosophy,
Every child may learn the lesson—
Blaze your own trail the best
you can
Without trespassing foreign
ground;
Smile, play, and sing, and be alive
To every blow of circumstance.

LXVI

To meet the hours as they come,
Salute the days as they pass by,
To bend your neck to no one's yoke,
To be full master of yourself,
To do a kindness when you can—
That is the happiness of life.

LXVII

To help a friend in dire needs,
To speak a word to the oppressed,
To think of things that help
mankind,
To scatter joy, unasked, unblessed—
For knowing minds divine the rest—
That is the happiness of life.

LXVIII

Yes, life is vain, life is empty,
But why repeat a sad refrain,
This echo of Khayyam's quatrains,
As long each day has a morrow,
As long as roses bloom again,
And empty cups may be refilled.

LXIX

Though we recall that days are
short,
Let's make the passing moments
hum.
Bees do murmur in the heather,
Does sundew exist only for them!
A little joy today seems fairer
Than the brightest strongholds
of Spain.

LXX

There are some joys all may attain,
To spouse some cause however slight,
To be a host to loyal friends,
To found some freeholds of your own,
Where mothers smile and children laugh,
And live in health and fragrance there.

LXXI

Some day religion unbiased
May sponsor stern needs of the day,
Life grow untrammeled and joyous
Without prohibition and laws,
Science and art prove their uses
And further the welfare of all.

LXXII

You, people, come out of your dreams,
Woo fortune and you may win her,
Fill the world with acts of good cheer,
Forget grey cares and daily toil,
Face bravely the swell and the gale
And strike out for headlands unknown.

LXXIII

Seek beauty and you will find her,
Brave the surge of the crowded
streets,
Or rest at the mountain's green
slope
And commune with the trees
and the birds,
With the soil and the moss-grown
rocks,
And pray at the shrines of the
gods.

LXXIV

There are roses and there is youth,
There are joys and sorrows and
love,
Dawn and twilight, the noonday
sun,
The rolling plains, the sky and
the sea,
None have lost their old time
mystery,
Events pass away, beauty
survives.

LXXV

Let us wrest beauty from all there is,
Each and all in their own poor way,
And gaily life will blossom forth
Like a beautiful summer's eve,
And we'll hail and bless each moment
Before it droops into the dark.

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